

WE CLAIM:

1. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable components, comprising:

a test case scenario object that comprises test methods that are arranged to test an electronic system, wherein the test methods that are arranged in a hierarchy that comprises a base class and subclasses, wherein each of the subclasses derives from the base class, and wherein the principle of inheritance is applied to each test method in accordance with the arrangement of the methods within the hierarchy; and

a test harness that is arranged to provide system test services for the test methods.

2. The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, wherein the principle of inheritance is selectively applied to subclass test methods.

3. The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, wherein the subclass test method comprises an attribute that is arranged to determine whether to apply the principle of inheritance.

4. The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, further comprising a test extraction engine that is configured to order the test methods according to the hierarchy.

5. The computer-readable medium of Claim 4, wherein the test extraction engine is configured to use a comparison function that is defined within the attributes to order the test methods according to the hierarchy.

6. The computer-readable medium of Claim 1, wherein the base class test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.

7. The computer-readable medium of Claim 6, wherein the subclass test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.

8. A method for automated testing, comprising:
  - providing test methods that are arranged to test an electronic system;
  - arranging the provided test methods in a hierarchy that comprises a base class and subclasses, wherein each of the subclasses derives from the base class;
  - applying the principle of inheritance to each test method in accordance with the arrangement of the methods within the hierarchy; and
  - using a test harness to provide system test services for the test methods.
9. The method of Claim 8, wherein the principle of inheritance is selectively applied to subclass test methods.
10. The method of Claim 8, further comprising determining whether to apply the principle of inheritance in accordance with a state of an attribute of a subclass test method.
11. The method of Claim 8, further comprising ordering the test methods according to the hierarchy.
12. The method of Claim 11, further comprising using a comparison function that is defined within the attributes to order the test methods according to the hierarchy.
13. The method of Claim 8, wherein the base class test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.
14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the subclass test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.

15. A test automation system, comprising:
  - a test case scenario object that comprises test methods that are arranged to test an electronic system, wherein the test methods that are arranged in a hierarchy that comprises a base class and subclasses, wherein each of the subclasses derives from the base class, and wherein the principle of inheritance is applied to each test method in accordance with the arrangement of the methods within the hierarchy; and
  - a test harness that is arranged to provide system test services for the test methods.
16. The system of Claim 15, wherein the principle of inheritance is selectively applied to subclass test methods.
17. The system of Claim 15, wherein the subclass test method comprises an attribute that is arranged to determine whether to apply the principle of inheritance.
18. The system of Claim 15, further comprising a test extraction engine that is configured to order the test methods according to the hierarchy.
19. The system of Claim 18, wherein the test extraction engine is configured to use a comparison function that is defined within the attributes to order the test methods according to the hierarchy.
20. The system of Claim 15, wherein the base class test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.
21. The system of Claim 15, wherein the subclass test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.

22. A test automation system, comprising:
  - means for providing test methods that are arranged to test an electronic system;
  - means for arranging the provided test methods in a hierarchy that comprises a base class and subclasses, wherein each of the subclasses derives from the base class;
  - means for applying the principle of inheritance to each test method in accordance with the arrangement of the methods within the hierarchy; and
  - using a test harness means to provide system test services for the test methods.
23. The system of Claim 22, wherein the principle of inheritance is selectively applied to subclass test methods.
24. The system of Claim 22, further comprising means for determining whether to apply the principle of inheritance in accordance with a state of an attribute of a subclass test method.
25. The system of Claim 22, further comprising means for ordering the test methods according to the hierarchy.
26. The system of Claim 25, further comprising means for using a comparison function that is defined within the attributes to order the test methods according to the hierarchy.
27. The system of Claim 22, wherein the base class test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.
28. The system of Claim 27, wherein the subclass test methods comprise a setup method and a teardown method.

29. The system of Claim 22, further comprising means for modifying the state of a subclass test method in response to an attribute inherited by the subclass test method.